

### THE METROPOLIS BUILDINGS ADMINISTRATION BILL.

A BILL "to amend the Act for regulating the Construction and the Use of Buildings in the Metropolis and its Neighbourhood, and to improve the Administration thereof," has been brought in by Lord John Manners. It consists of 26 pages and 79 clauses. It confirms the present Buildings Act (7 & 8 Vict. cap. 84), excepting where inconsistent with this, and repeals the Act 9 & 10 Vict. cap. 5, passed to amend the latter. It provides for the creation of a Law Court similar to that in Lord Seymour's Bill, the objections to which we have already expressed; with an architectural referee, *in case* he should be needed. Public buildings are to be subject to the architectural referee only, and other buildings to the district surveyor only. The judgments are to be given in a summary way in open court, but, upon application, the judge may order a trial by a jury of five. The judge may, also, with consent of the parties, refer questions to arbitration. Questions as to right of way, lights, &c. may be tried by the Court. Appeal may be made to one of the superior courts upon a special case. Costs to be paid by the party appealing if decision be adverse to him, but not otherwise. Provision is made for diminishing the number of District Surveyors as opportunity may arise. Commissioners of Works may make modifications on receiving representation from the Court. District Surveyor is to ascertain whether new houses are provided with apparatus for constant supply of water, and report to Water Company.

The Bill comes before us too late for us to do more than give this brief account of its contents. The present "schedules," with all their difficulties, are left untouched, so that it cannot be regarded as final legislation on the subject, even should it be passed. Should it be proposed to revise these under the power of modification given to the Commissioners of Works, it will produce, with the two Acts, and the various existing modifications, such a lengthened and complicated body of laws, that builders will not know what they may do, and what they may not.

### ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETIES.

**Oxford Society.**—At a meeting on the 26th ult. the secretary read the report of the committee announcing the usual number of applications for advice, and detailing the particulars of an excursion which it was proposed to make on Whit-Tuesday to Didcot, Faringdon, Uffington, Sparsholt, &c. for the purpose of examining the churches. Mr. Eld read a paper on the ancient guilds of this country, tracing their origin in Saxon times and the rules by which they were then governed. He afterwards gave an account of the same kind of brotherhoods which became so very numerous in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II., adding instances of their internal regulations in London, York, Leeds, Birmingham, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwick, Coventry, and other places, and concluded by contrasting them with the benefit societies of the present day.

**Yorkshire Society.**—Last week this society examined St. John's Church and St. Thomas's Church, in Leeds, both of which have been lately erected, and examined the architectural designs of both edifices. At a meeting afterwards, the Rev. Dr. Hook, on taking the chair, remarked that if, at any time, an architectural society were a valuable institution, it is especially so in an age like our own, which has, to its disgrace, no style of its own. The future historian will have to record that there exists, so far as the church is concerned, no architectural style of the nineteenth century. We have been building churches for the last half-century, but instead of considering our requirements, and building churches adapted to the liturgy of the nineteenth century, we have been servile imitators of the churches of the fourteenth century. Our successors will hold us in derision when they record that to meet the wants of the reformed liturgy we built churches on the model of those erected to meet the wants of the unreformed liturgy. It is time that we begin to act on sounder

principles. The examination of the ancient churches is important, for all new principles to be correct must be based on old principles: modern civilization is closely connected with ancient civilization, and historical investigation and antiquarian research are necessary as well as independence of thought. Still the time he had hoped was come, or was coming, when architects would refuse to become mere imitators, and would give full play to their genius and their powers of invention in adapting buildings to our existing wants.—A paper by Archdeacon Churton was then read; also, papers by Mr. Dykes, "On the History of Church Arrangements;" and by Mr. Spark, "On the Position of Choirs and Organs in Churches."

**Bedfordshire Society.**—A meeting of this Society was held on the 25th ult. when a paper, by Captain Smythe, on "Tradesmen's Tokens," was read. A paper, by Mr. Griffith, was afterwards read, containing "Suggestions for a more perfect Period of Gothic Architecture." His view was that a new style might be formed upon geometrical principles—by a combination of regular figures; and that all decoration should be taken from forms in nature, chiefly from flowers and foliage of plants. A paper, by Mr. J. Tacey Wing, on Elstow Church, concluded the proceedings.

### COMPETITION AMONG BUILDERS.

#### STATE OF THE TRADE.

It is admitted on all sides, and I believe by nearly all connected with the building trade, that competition has reduced it to a degrading and miserable condition,—a condition in which no doubt all trades in their present bearing are more or less affected. To such a state has it come, that the stability of trade seems to be undermined altogether, and unless some vigorous and decisive steps are taken to endeavour, if possible, at least, to check its progress, a state of depression almost without a parallel must be the result. It is nothing less than gambling, and of so bad a nature that the dice-box or the thimble-rig cannot surpass it. It is a monopoly raging without a bound—an act of a most desperate suicidal kind. Could it but be seen and felt in its true light, and its baneful effects unveiled, every honest and benevolent man—every man of a philanthropic nature—would turn from it with disgust and contempt. No man who had at heart the well-being of his fellows and a love for his children, and a desire for their future prosperity and happiness, but would at once use all his powers of body and mind to exterminate so fatal a disease. The present age is assuredly one of monopoly; a struggle of might against right,—a struggle of the rich and overbearing against the weak and the lowly,—a struggle of oppression against freedom, which, if continued in, will in the course of time produce, I firmly believe, the most disastrous results. We know for facts, that in our trading firms the rich and the noble, though kept in the back ground, are in reality partners. We say this without fear of contradiction: against such it is possible to compete? Can a man of small trading be satisfied, or can he obtain a livelihood upon 2½, 3, or 5 per cent. with which his more powerful opponents are? (for a time). Can he contend against such? It is impossible. His amount of business may be confined within a few hundreds, while theirs exceed tens of thousands. When we hear of one man keeping his six, ten, or perhaps twenty shops: when we hear of another not satisfied with dealing in his own particular branch, but combining a multitude of branches under one roof; common sense tells us the little tradesman must sink. What happiness would there be were trades confined within reasonable limits—what better pay for services rendered—what honesty then that does not now exist? But to the building trade: regarding it I would suggest two or three ideas, and which I know will be approved by many who read your journal should you think them worthy of your pages.

I object to the present system of furnishing quantities when taken out by one surveyor. It gives an opportunity to unlimited competition when tenders are advertised for, which seems to be getting a prevailing fashion, and one against which I think builders should set their faces. Were each person tendering called upon to take out his own, instead of ten, twenty, and thirty competitors we should find but four, five, or six. Can we wonder when we see building works advertised, and quantities supplied indiscriminately to all who may enter the lists (no matter who they be),—can we wonder when we read of one man offering to perform certain works at 1,000*l.*, the value of which is really 2,000*l.*

and finding some other wiseracre asking 3,000*l.*: can we wonder, I say, at such things under the present system?

This is one of our great evils of contracting. There are many that time will not permit me to dwell upon were I inclined, but I will slightly touch upon another. It is the abominable system of "cubing." Was ever anything more preposterous than to find a man cubing the dimensions of a certain building, perhaps a workhouse, or hospital, at a certain price per foot, and cubing another building filled with ornamental work, or fittings, of a somewhat expensive description; and allowing, at guess, an extra farthing or halfpenny per foot, regardless of rhyme or reason, and upon this alone supplying an estimate? I repeat, it is not to be wondered at, under such circumstances, that discrepancies occur; but there are a multitude of other things that I cannot mention here, things contrary to arithmetic, common sense, or argument. It is a matter of surprise, it is the continual talk, that a body of good, substantial men in the trade do not form a society, and form rules for regulating the trade. It wants but a spirited beginning, and, before many months, I feel satisfied, great results would be arrived at. I believe that if but fifty were publicly to give out their determination to adopt some plan for the improvement of the trade generally, before one month the members would be increased to 500. WALTER.

### ON THE ADMISSION OF DAYLIGHT INTO BUILDINGS, PARTICULARLY IN THE NARROW AND CONFINED LOCALITIES OF TOWNS.\*

LIGHT has been reckoned by philosophers as by no means amongst the least necessary of the substances or influences which nature has provided for the proper development of the functions of animals, especially of those endowed with rational faculties. Every rudimentary creative on chemistry, physiology, or other branch of natural philosophy which touches upon the subjects of light or of organic matter, whether in the animal or the vegetable kingdom, connects the perfect development of the one with the full influence of the other.

Lavoisier writing in the last century states— "Thus much is certain: that plants which grow in darkness are altogether white, languid, and unhealthy, and that to make them acquire vigour, and recover their natural colours, the direct influence of light is absolutely necessary. Something similar takes place even in animals. Mankind degenerate to a certain degree when employed in sedentary manufactures, or living in crowded houses, or in the narrow lanes of large cities: whereas they improve in their nature and constitution in most of the country labours which are carried on in the open air." It is remarkable that this philosopher has placed light as an agent of health even before pure air, and the other sanitary requirements which are receiving most attention at the present day. But upon rational and moral beings there is doubtless a beneficial influence on the mind, greater and more direct than that upon the body: so that it may be safely alleged, that habitual existence with deficiency of light, whilst it cannot improve the intellectual faculties, is unfavourable to cheerfulness of mind, high standard of morals, and health of body.

This preface, short as it is, I almost feel to be unnecessary, before offering to your attention some remarks and suggestions as to some of the means by which architects may carry into practice in their buildings, especially in narrow and confined parts of towns, where most difficulties on this subject occur, a sure system of obtaining a sufficiency of daylight.

The objects to which this paper is limited are—firstly, to demonstrate the methods by which light, admitted through openings, may be estimated proportionally as to quantity and effect; secondly, by reference to existing buildings to endeavour to settle the numerical proportions obtained by such estimate into definite effects; and, thirdly, to suggest means where the definite effect so ascertained is too little, of increasing that effect, and of diminishing the increase.

Scarcely any rules on this important subject have been laid down by writers on architecture. Such as there are, they will be in most

\* Read at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Royal Institute of British Architects, May 17th.